

# **Washington Commerce Corridor Feasibility Study: Results and Recommendations**

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# Overview of Today's Presentation

- Overview of the study's origins
- The study process up to this point
- New information in tonight's presentation
- Next steps

# How did this study come about?

In the State's 2003-2005 Transportation Budget, the Washington State Legislature appropriated \$500,000 for a feasibility study of a Washington State "Commerce Corridor."

## Key issues leading to this study

### Transportation

- Congestion along I-5
- Freight rail congestion
- Intercity passenger rail
- Growing truck traffic
- Port trade growth
- Insufficient transportation funding to expand the system

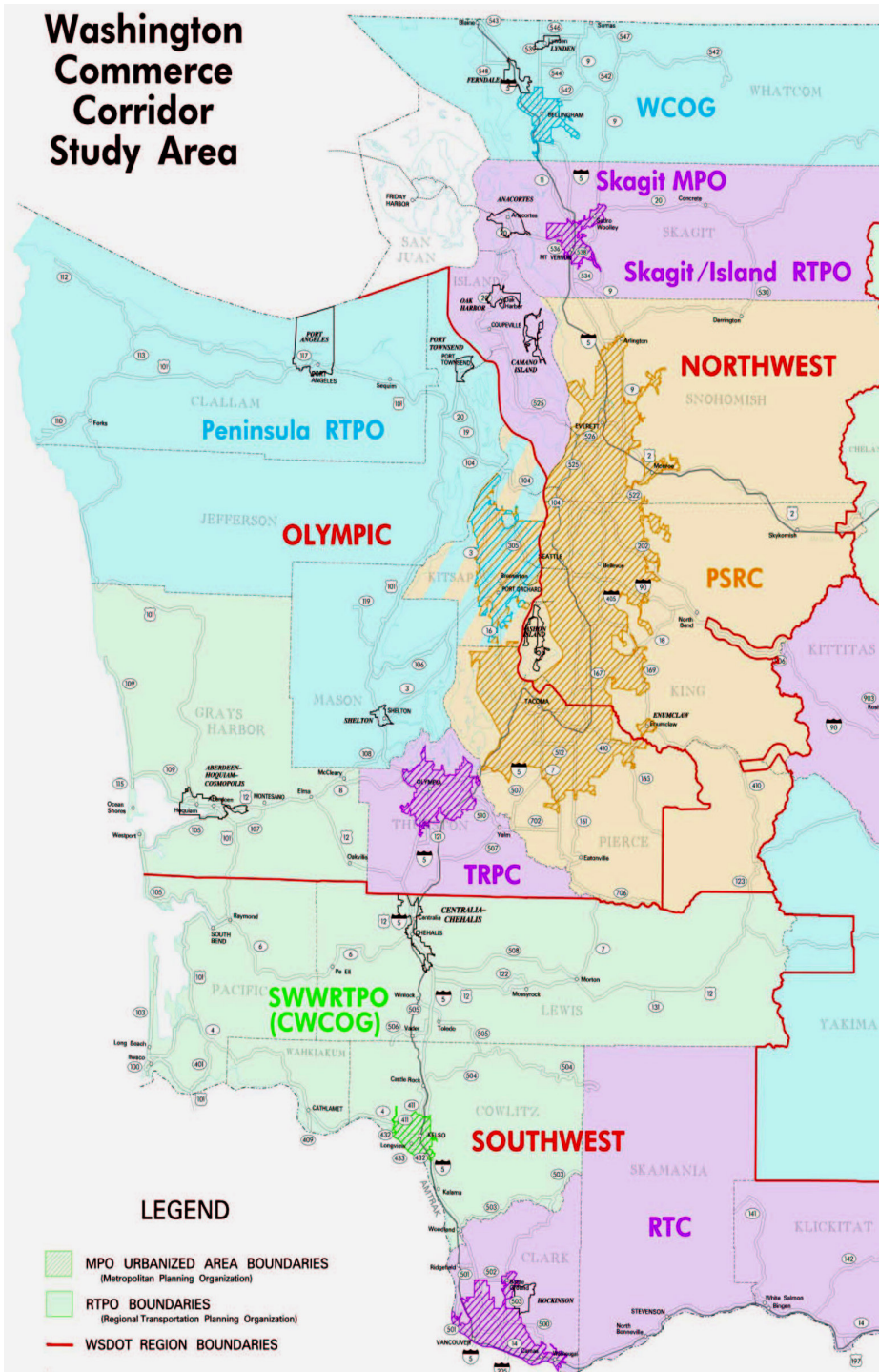
### Energy

- Olympic (& Other) Pipeline Issues
- Alaskan/Canadian Energy Production
- Access to Markets in California & Arizona
- Power Production

## What's the concept?

A North/South Transportation and Energy Corridor as an alternative to existing corridors from Lewis County to the Canadian border (by-passing the congested Puget Sound region) constructed, financed, and operated by the private sector.

## Washington Commerce Corridor Study Area



## Study Area

- Lewis County northerly to Canadian border
- Interstate 5
- Mainline railroads
- Major intercity energy facilities
- Operate on separate rights-of-way

# **Steering Committee**

**Chair:** Dan O'Neal, Transportation Commissioner

## **Legislators:**

Senator Tim Sheldon

Senator Dan Swecker

Representative Doug Ericksen

Representative Geoff Simpson

## **Public Agencies:**

Scott Merriman, Washington Association of Counties

Jackie White, Association of Washington Cities

Charlie Howard, WSDOT

Barbara Ivanov, WSDOT

# Project Tasks

Task 1. Develop Evaluation Approach & Definition of Feasibility

Task 2. Develop A Definition of Project Features

Task 3. Develop Preliminary Financial Information

Task 4. Examine The Legal and Statutory Provisions

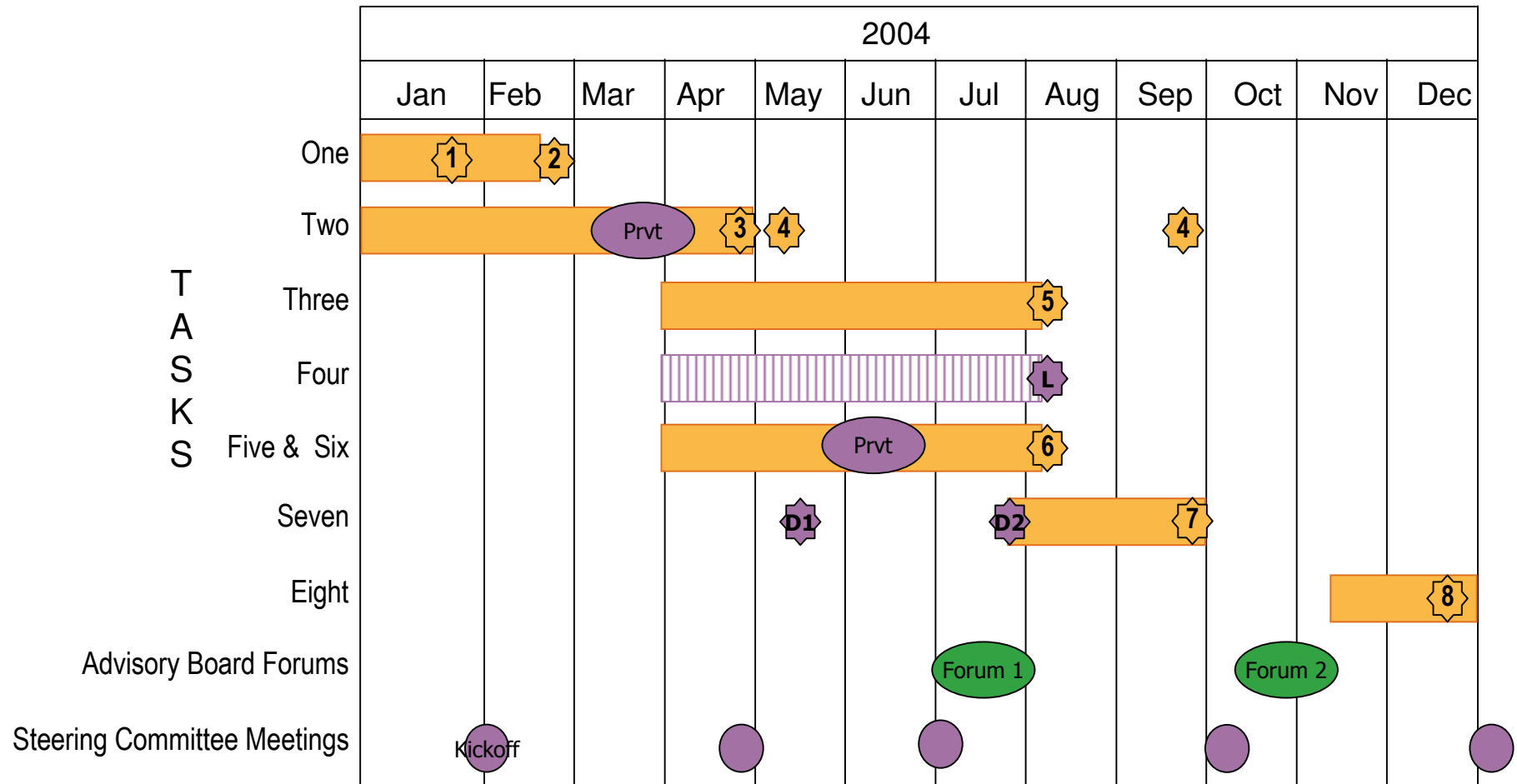
Task 5. Identify Potential Environmental Issues

Task 6. Identification of Community Issues & Strategies to Addressing Concerns

Task 7. Develop Draft Report

Task 8. Develop Final Report

# Project Schedule



# **New Information on the Study's Findings on Feasibility**



## **The Bottom Line: Current Washington Commerce Corridor Vision is not Feasible**

Research found a north-south, limited-access corridor involving truck and passenger traffic as well as accommodating rail and utilities spanning from Lewis County to the Canadian border, developed, financed, designed, constructed and operated by private sector consortiums is not feasible.

**Is there sufficient demand for a corridor?**

## **No energy sector interest**

Based on key informant interviews, the energy sector is not interested in developing a north-south corridor

- Distribution pattern and location don't match forecasts
- Planning horizon is too long
- High public risk for assembling right of way

## **No rail interest**

- North-South passenger rail has demand, but passenger rail doesn't turn a profit
- Freight rail's priority is to the East
- No interest to re-locate current North-South lines due to customer access
- Current North-South congestion is a matter of balancing freight service with passenger service in urban areas

# Vehicle tolls

- Passenger vehicle trips not feasible
  - Most current trips short-haul, not long-haul
  - Corridor bypasses densest passenger traffic flow areas (urban areas)
  - Current plans in place to address urban congestion
- Truck tolls not feasible without public funding
  - No volumes to support I-90 to North
  - Interest/volumes to support I-90 to South (e.g., Greater Seattle to Chehalis), but would require public funding
  - To be feasible, a two-lane project would need to divert 50% of I-5 trucks, each paying about a \$60 toll (about \$0.60/mile for 100 miles from Chehalis to the I-90 area)

**Can such a corridor be built?**

# **Environmental/community impacts**

- Fatal flaw: Cedar River watershed
- Damage to community fabric
- Extensive changes to current zoning
- Environmental review processes in Washington not able to handle a project of this scope and represent significant pre-construction risk for a private venture

## **Project cost too high**

- \$41 billion-\$50 billion... too expensive for the private sector



## **Legal and Institutional Issues**

- Current legislation discourages public-private ventures of this nature
- Would need to create a new single-purpose entity to guide the project
- Limitations on role private entity can play in environmental review process
- Restrictions on co-locating utilities

# Study Recommendations

- Reduce the complexity, scale and length of the corridor concept: focus on freight alone and where demand is highest – between greater Seattle and Oregon.
- Pursue a multimodal freight based corridor strategy for Western Washington, tied to plans in Canada, Oregon, and California.
- Conduct a detailed feasibility analysis of a public/private truck freight corridor between greater Seattle and Chehalis, and possibly south to Oregon.
- Create more robust public-private transportation legislation in Washington
- Create a single entity to coordinate creation of state significant energy corridors
- Develop a streamlined environmental review and permitting process

## **Questions and Comments**

# Thank You

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